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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 231st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 1 July 1997, at 11 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. KA (Senegal)

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REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH RESOLUTION ES-10/2

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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR AND NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, HELD IN JAKARTA FROM 4 TO 7 MAY, THE UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, HELD IN AMMAN FROM 20 TO 22 MAY, THE UNITED NATIONS NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, HELD IN NEW YORK FROM 9 TO 11 JUNE AND THE MINISTERIAL MEETING AND SUMMIT CONFERENCE OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY, HELD IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE FROM 28 MAY TO 4 JUNE 1997

2. The CHAIRMAN said that the deliberations of the Asian Seminar and NGO Symposium, the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People and the North American NGO Symposium had all reflected the participants' profound concern at recent developments in the Middle East. While supporting the peace process, the participants had expressed serious concern over the current stalemate, particularly as a result of Israeli policies and practices which the international community had been unable to influence. It had been noted at all three meetings that Israel had intensified its policies and practices of land confiscation and settlement in the occupied territory, including Jerusalem. In that context, the participants had condemned the construction of a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim. They had stressed, particularly in the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, that the repeated closures of the occupied territory, including Jerusalem, and of areas under Palestinian authority had resulted in grave economic hardship for Palestinians. The participants had expressed deep concern that Israel was seeking to impose a solution on its own terms, in disregard of United Nations resolutions, international opinion and Arab interests.

3. The participants in the three meetings had called on all countries to make additional efforts and to take collective action to end that policy. They had noted the importance of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly and stressed the importance of implementing the resolution it had adopted, and of the follow-up mechanism.

4. The theme of the United Nations Asian Seminar and NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine had been "Achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the question of Palestine - the role of Asia". Three round tables had been organized on, respectively, the Middle East peace process and developments since the signing, in 1993, of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements; key issues of a just and comprehensive settlement; and the role of Asia in promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine through solidarity and assistance. A workshop for non-governmental organizations had also been held on mobilization and networking of Asian non-governmental organizations in support of a just and comprehensive solution of the question of Palestine. Presentations had been made by 18 experts from Asia and other regions, followed by open discussions. Representatives of 56 Governments, 5 United Nations bodies and agencies,

1 intergovernmental organization and 22 non-governmental organizations, special guests of the host Government of Indonesia and representatives of the media, universities and institutes had participated in the Seminar and NGO Symposium. All sessions had been very well attended and had received wide press coverage in Indonesia.

5. The gathering had clarified the fundamental issues of the conflict and the current status of the peace process. Non-governmental organizations had found it useful for planning their future efforts in support of the Palestinian people and had elected a new coordinating body for follow-up action in Asia. He expressed appreciation to the Government of Indonesia for hosting the seminar and NGO symposium and to Mr. Alatas, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, and Mr. Wisnumurti, Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for addressing, respectively, the opening and closing sessions of the Seminar and the NGO Symposium.

6. The theme of the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People had been "Palestinian human development needs". Round tables had been held on sustainable human development as the basis for nation-building; promoting poverty eradication and sustainable development; and promoting gender equality and the full participation of women in society. Seventeen experts from various regions, including a number of Palestinians and one Israeli, had presented papers. Representatives of 32 Governments, 3 intergovernmental organizations, 11 United Nations bodies and agencies and 17 non-governmental organizations had participated in the Seminar. The Seminar had clarified needs and problems, provided information to the public, developed action-oriented proposals and mobilized action in support of the Palestinian people in the critical phase of the transition period. He thanked the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for hosting the Seminar and, in particular, Mr. Ensour, Deputy Prime Minister of Jordan, for his opening statement.

7. The theme of the North American NGO Symposium had been "Thirty years of occupation - looking ahead towards self-determination and statehood". Its round tables had dealt with the issues of a just and comprehensive settlement; the role of the international community in the transition towards permanent status; and the promotion of joint action of Palestinian and North American non-governmental organizations in support of the transition to self-determination and statehood. Six workshops had been held on related topics with a view to mobilizing concrete action by North American non-governmental organizations. Representatives of 65 non-governmental organizations, 55 of which were accredited to the Committee, had participated.

8. The Symposium had been preceded by the Special Meeting of the Committee in Commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the occupation by Israel of the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories, which had been attended by representatives of non-governmental organizations and had doubtless had a positive impact on the deliberations. The statements by representatives of non-governmental organizations had reflected their commitment to influencing government policies in favour of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their numerous joint initiatives with their Palestinian counterparts in order to alleviate the hardships of the occupation. Much remained to be done in order to influence public opinion in North America, to

attract the attention of the media and to widen the base of operations. The North American Coordinating Committee, composed of American and Canadian non-governmental organizations, had held elections and would be carrying out follow-up activities.

9. The final document of the Asian seminar and NGO Symposium had been distributed to Committee members. The report of the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People had been submitted to the Secretary-General with a request to circulate it at the forthcoming session of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva and at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

10. Turning to the sixty-sixth session of the Council of Ministers and the thirty-third session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), he said that the agenda items on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine had been considered directly at the level of the Council of Ministers and of Heads of State and Government. In his address to the Council of Ministers, Mr. Kaddoumi, Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), had described developments in the peace process and the difficulties which had undermined it since the advent of the new Israeli Government in June 1996. He had emphasized the illegal actions taken by Israel as a result of its decision to build new settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in East Jerusalem. The international community had reacted to those illegal actions by requesting two meetings of the Security Council, two meetings of the General Assembly and statements of position by the League of Arab States, the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, OAU and the Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries. Following Mr. Kaddoumi's statement, a number of delegations had deplored the undermining of the peace process, denounced the illegal actions taken by the occupying Power in violation of the 1949 Geneva Convention, and called upon the parties to refrain from all acts of violence and to respect and implement, in good faith, the agreements concluded thus far.

11. The Council of Ministers had reaffirmed its political support for the cause of the Palestinian people and the exercise of their legitimate rights to self-determination and independence. The Council, which had pinned great hopes on the peace process and provided all necessary support to it, had expressed its deep concern about the current situation on the ground.

12. The Council had adopted two important resolutions on the situation in the Middle East and one on the question of Palestine, in whose drafting he had played an active role. In its resolution on the question of Palestine, the Council reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the PLO, to exercise its inalienable national rights, including its right to return to its homeland, recover its property, exercise self-determination and establish an independent state on its national soil with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the principles and resolutions of the United Nations. The OAU resolution further called on Israel to cease the practice of confiscating Palestinian lands, particularly those in East Jerusalem and its environs, and of expanding settlements. It stressed the need to implement resolution ES-10/2, adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session of 25 April 1997, to preserve the territorial integrity of

occupied Palestinian lands and to ensure the freedom of movement of persons within the region and within the Palestinian territories in general. It reaffirmed that adherence to agreements and international law was a sine qua non for the maintenance of international peace and security and called for the strict implementation of the peace process. It also called on the countries that sponsored the peace process, the parties concerned and the international community to deploy all possible efforts to revamp the peace process and ensure its success.

13. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government had subsequently endorsed those resolutions. President Yasser Arafat had met with many Heads of State and Government and urged them to use all their influence to salvage the peace process, whose future depended on stopping the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory.

14. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) thanked the Chairman for his report and expressed appreciation to the Governments of Indonesia and Jordan for hosting the Asian Seminar and NGO Symposium and the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, respectively. He also expressed gratitude to the Organization of African Unity for adopting the two extremely important resolutions referred to by the Chairman in his report. The African position would have a crucial bearing on the position adopted by the international community as a whole on the question of Palestine.

REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH RESOLUTION ES-10/2 (A/ES-10/6-S/1997/494)

15. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution ES-10/2 (A/ES-10/6-S/1997/494).

16. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations had issued statements on 17 and 30 June 1997. The statement of 17 June had been issued in response to the cancellation of the mission of the Secretary-General, and stated that Israel's attempt to impose conditions and restrictions on the mission represented just another example of the unlawful and antagonistic behaviour of its current Government, examples of which were its conditions that any mission should be conducted outside the scope of General Assembly resolution ES-10/2, that the mission should function within a very narrow scope and that the report on the mission should not reflect the positions of anyone on the Israeli side other than Israeli Government officials. That had marked the first time that any Government in the Middle East had virtually refused to cooperate with the Secretary-General. The international community should voice its clear opposition to such behaviour.

17. The statement of 30 June had been issued after study of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/ES-10/6-S/1997/494. The report was a valuable document for the international community that provided additional solid proof of the illegal policies and practices of the Israeli Government, particularly with regard to Jerusalem, and illegal settlement activities and the dangerous ramifications of those measures. The substance of the report should

be fully taken into consideration by Member States when deciding upon further actions to guarantee the compliance of the Government of Israel with the provisions of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant resolutions and the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

18. The report raised a number of important points. First, it had not been possible for the Secretary-General to dispatch a Special Envoy to Israel, owing to restrictions imposed by the Government of Israel on the scope of the proposed mission. Moreover, the Israeli Government was continuing settlement activities throughout the occupied Territories. In defiance of General Assembly resolutions, it had not abandoned construction at Jabal Abu Ghneim, although that had serious political, demographic and economic consequences, threatened the peace process and had led to fatal clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli military forces. Israel continued to expropriate large portions of Palestinian land for settlement, and foreign companies and individuals continued to provide external support for settlements and their economic infrastructure. The Israeli Government had continued to implement illegal measures in Jerusalem aimed at altering the character, legal status and demographic composition of the city. One such measure had been to revoke the residency rights of many Palestinian Jerusalemites and redefine their status as "resident immigrants" subject to discriminatory immigration controls, in an attempt to reduce the Arab presence in Jerusalem. The Israeli Government had also not accepted the de jure applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to all territories occupied since 1967 although all other High Contracting Parties, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross, had retained their consensus on its applicability. Israel's policy of general closure and the severe restrictions it had imposed on the movements of persons and goods had frustrated the principle of territorial integrity, and had also obstructed the work of the United Nations. Safe passage arrangements had not been established, and arrangements for the Gaza seaport and airport had not been agreed upon. The report of the Secretary-General also dealt with other significant issues including Israeli violations of international law, such as the detention and torture of Palestinians in Israeli jails.

19. Given the situation described in the report, his delegation considered that the tenth emergency special session should be resumed, and, anticipating the support of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Committee, the Arab Group had requested that it should be resumed as soon as possible.

20. Israel's resolute refusal to comply with General Assembly resolution ES-10/2 or to respect international law and the will of the international community was unacceptable, and it was to be hoped that the resumed emergency special session would adopt a stronger position than it had previously done. Three points needed to be addressed: the support given by the private sector to illegal Israeli settlement activities could not be tolerated; the principle that States Members should act in accordance with the Charter must be strongly reaffirmed; and measures to enforce article 1 common to the four Geneva Conventions should be considered.

21. Given the importance of Jerusalem, his delegation had been astonished that Romania, which was a Member State and member of the Committee, had violated

Security Council and International Civil Aviation Organization resolutions, which prohibited the use of Jerusalem's Kalandia airport, during the Romanian Foreign Minister's previous visit to Israel. International law and the will of the international community must be respected. His delegation hoped that Romania would provide an explanation of its action which would not reflect a change in its position with regard to Jerusalem, Palestine or the Middle East.

22. Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon) said that his delegation's reply to the Secretary-General with regard to General Assembly resolution ES-10/2 had been submitted late and so had not appeared in the report. He requested that it should be included in the report as an annex.

OTHER MATTERS

23. Ms. ALMEIDA (Department of Public Information) said that the international seminar for journalists on the question of Palestine, entitled "The Peace Process: The Challenges Ahead", held in Athens on 26 and 27 May 1997, had been attended by academics and experts on the political and economic developments in the Middle East as well as by officials from the Palestinian National Authority, senior journalists from prominent media organizations around the world, local media, and representatives of States Members of the United Nations and specialized agencies based in Athens as Observers.

24. The seminar had discussed the status of the peace process and the implementation of peace agreements, as well as the final status negotiations and the economic situation in the region. Following the seminar, eight international journalists had taken part in a fact-finding news mission and had visited Cairo and Amman, where they had held meetings with officials from the Egyptian and Jordanian Ministries of Foreign Affairs, as well as with the local press corps. The proceedings of the seminar and coverage of the news mission would be published in due course.

25. The CHAIRMAN said that the previous day, he had had a meeting with the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to discuss the need for a meeting between the Committee Bureau and the Troika of the European Union. It had been agreed with Luxembourg that contacts for such a meeting would be established in early July.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.